THE
RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

. I. December 27, 1935 Tebet 1, 5696 No. 17

EDITORIALS

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by Mordecai H. Lewittes

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by Edward L. Israel

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THE SOCIETY FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM

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THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST POSITION

WE approach our task from the point of view of Judaism as a religious civilization. We envisage Judaism as the proper concern of all Jews, religious and unreligious, conservative and radical. . . .

IN affirming that Judaism is a civilization we give emphasis to the fact that it includes . . . communal organization, language, law, art, *mores*, customs, as well as religion. Moreover, all of these elements are organically related to each other; to omit any of them is to distort Judaism. All of them are functions of the group life of Israel and cannot be maintained unless we maintain the unity and integrity of the Jewish people and the continuity of its spiritual efforts.

WE believe that the material and spiritual welfare of the Jews can be achieved only through Jewish communal organization. . . . We favor the establishment of Jewish communal life in America, democratically administered and organized in such a manner as to include all Jews who wish to identify themselves with the Jewish people, regardless of what their personal philosophy may be.

IN affirming that Judaism is a *religious* civilization, we recognize first, the historic fact that the God idea has dominated the entire pattern of Jewish life in the past, and that continuity with our past is impossible without giving to religion a position, if not of primacy, at least of *primus inter pares;* and secondly, the social fact that a mature and complete civilization is bound to find expression in the idea of God and in forms of religious worship in which the hopes and ideals of human life are rendered articulate. It is that very sense of need for religion that impels us to reinterpret the traditional beliefs in keeping with what for us must be a tenable world outlook, and to revise and develop the traditional usages in keeping with spiritual needs which we can genuinely experience.

WE consider the establishment of Palestine indispensable to the life of Judaism in the diaspora. We seek to enable Jewish civilization so to root itself in the soil of Palestine as to make of the land the cultural center for Israel's intellectual and spiritual rebirth. We oppose any attempt to render Palestine the object of imperialist aims or the victim of private profit-seeking. We endorse every effort toward the establishment of a cooperative commonwealth in Palestine based upon social justice and social cooperation. . . .

WE are opposed to Fascism in every form. We object to any philosophy of government which seeks to curtail the rights of individuals to the free pursuit of personal salvation through participation in any religious or cultural activity, or through affiliation with any national or ethnic group. . . . Recognizing the horror and irrationality of war as a means of adjusting conflicting interests, we shall support every effort looking to the perfection of machinery for the peaceful adjudication of such conflicts and to the utilization of such machinery as exists, wherever possible. Under no circumstances shall we give countenance or support to an imperialistic war that is designed to advance the interests of exploiting and oppressing classes. . . .

SOCIAL righteousness is possible only upon the establishment of a cooperative society, the elimination of the profit system, and the public ownership of all natural resources and basic industries. Until these objectives are achieved our sympathies and our support go to labor in its struggle with its employers for a more equitable distribution of the income of industry, and in the assertion of its right to organize for the protection of its interests without interference from its employers.

—*From "The Reconstructionist," January* 11, 1935.

THE
RECONSTRUCTIONIST

Vo. I. December 27, 1935 Tebet 1, 5696 No. 17

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EDITORIALS

Hanukkah

TWENTY-ONE centuries have passed since that day, in the year 165 B.C.E., when the brave followers of Judas Maccabeus rededicated the Temple at Jerusalem. That event made so deep an impression upon the Jewish people, that each succeeding anniversary of it they celebrated as the festival of Hanukkah. That festival is still pregnant with meaning for us if we understand properly the circumstances that gave rise to it and the manner in which it has been observed by our people throughout the years.

When the Syrian Greeks who controlled Palestine during the first half of the second century attempted to foist an alien religion and culture upon the Jews, rebellion was aroused. The leaders of the revolt fixed their eyes upon a single objective: to emancipate themselves from an imposed civilization. The cleansing of the Temple and its rededication constituted the triumph of that revolt—and the Hasidim, the ancestors of the Pharisees, had had enough. There was no more point in fighting. The other members of the Hasmonean family, however, saw in this crisis an opportunity to revive the grandeur that was Solomon's empire, and not content with the freedom to live and worship as Jews, they embarked upon an imperialist campaign. They recaptured territories long lost to them and they gained political power. But Jewish tradition never thanked them for these exploits; they honored only the cleansers of the Temples. The traditional story of Hanukkah always ends with the rededication of the Temple.

Why did Jews ignore those eighty years of political independence under the Hasmoneans? Why did they never look back upon them with yearning and cast their hopes for their restoration in the mould of political power? Because our Sages looked upon the sovereign State as a menace and an affront. For them, the Roman Empire was the epitome of the State; and Rome was detestably predatory and violent. The Hasmoneans had merely aped the Romans. What they wanted was sheer power, and the luxury that power commanded. By aping the Roman Empire, the Hasmoneans had transformed the Jewish people into a fighting unit.

Why were our Sages so greatly opposed to statehood? Because they saw in the State no instrument for the ethicizing of human life. For them, the State represented not an organization of people designed to care for the individual, but one designed to exploit him.

Twenty-one hundred years have passed since the Maccabean revolt, and mankind has not yet succeeded in fashioning a State capable of bringing out the best in the individual, of eliciting the best of his individuality and of fostering his highest

cooperation with others. And if our celebration of Hanukkah is to mean anything, it must reemphasize the verdict of Jewish history. It must reiterate the perennial Jewish protest against that form of human organization which seeks power for rulers and not self-fulfillment for the people who constitute it.

We must be aware of those who, in our day, seek to idealize the Hasmoneans and to find in them the justification for the establishment in Palestine of State power. They are attempting today to ape the predatory states of the world as once Rome was aped. Posterity will not thank us if we permit them to succeed.

Wanted: A Consumers' Kashrut Cooperative

A TRIAL has been conducted during the past few weeks in a high court in New York City, which has brought into tragic relief the deplorable chaos that prevails in Jewish life. The case centers about the issue of *kashrut* supervision and rabbinical authority. In the absence of an adequate Anglo-Jewish press, the vast majority of Jews are unfortunately unaware of the controversy that is raging; but in a sense, it is perhaps fortunate that the whole miserable mess has not been given wide publicity, for it is a *hilul ha-shem* and a sad commentary upon the organization of our religious life.

These are some salient facts: the kosher chicken industry caters to the needs of some 300,000 Jewish families in New York, and involves an expenditure by them of about $47,000,000 a year. Between 75 and 100 kosher chicken markets supply the demand. The rabbis of an association known as the *Vaad Ha-kashrut* supervise the slaughtering of the chickens. They are supported by the income derived from the difference between the cost of the "tags" which are attached to approved poultry, and a small fraction of the additional charge made for these chickens by virtue of their *kashrut*. Thus about one-half million "tags" are used each year; they yield about $18,000 a year; the rabbis are supported from this sum.

Now, some rabbis who belong to a rival organization known as the *Keneset Harabbanim* have challenged the monopoly of the members of the *Vaad*. These several rabbis supervise the *kashrut* of a slaughter-house which refused to submit to the "tag" tax, but which insisted that the chickens were absolutely kosher nevertheless. Whereupon the rabbis of the *Vaad* placed a ban (*issur*) upon their poultry, forbidding observant Jews to purchase from this independent butcher. This butcher then got out an injunction against the *issur,* and the court must decide whether these rabbis have a right to issue an *issur.*

Out of all this sordid confusion a number of implications emerge. First, Jewish life has disintegrated to such an extent that it is no longer clear what constitutes membership in the rabbinate, what authority, if any, a rabbi enjoys, to whom so-called leaders are responsible. We do not know whether the Jews of New York are a community, or merely an agglomeration of disunited individuals. Secondly, the institution of *kashrut,* specifically, is in a terrible condition. It suffers from every vice, ranging from ordinary abuse to outright racketeering. Despite the many efforts made by laymen, no success has yet been achieved in supplying observant Jews with really kosher poultry at reasonable prices. Thirdly, vast sums of money are expended every year, which find their way into the pockets of private individuals who are exploiting a religious institution for their personal profit.

In the meantime, the more sensitive Jew is impelled to turn his back upon the whole system of *kashrut*. In addition to the normal difficulties involved in its observance, he is now faced with the difficulty of reconciling it with the contentiousness of its trustees and the unsavori-

ness of their litigations. It is time something were done to bring order into the chaos, and to restore the institution of *kashrut* to good repute. We believe that it is worth rehabilitating for it possesses real and potential values that cannot easily be ignored. Its real value consists in the fact that its observance contributes to Jewish consciousness and to the sense of identification with the Jewish people. Its potential value consists in the possibility of providing a substantial and consistent source for the support of worthwhile Jewish causes. The thousands of dollars that are now spent for kosher meat and poultry over and above the amount that would ordinarily be spent for an equal quantity of non-kosher meat and poultry might go a long way toward maintaining Jewish educational and religious institutions.

We propose a concrete plan. The rabbis of New York, who are members of the Rabbinical Assembly of America, and those congregations, which are affiliated with the United Synagogue of America, who are interested in the perpetuation of *kashrut,* and who have no ulterior, material motive, should band together to form a *Consumers' Kashrut Cooperative.* They should make arrangements with a slaughter-house to supply meat and poultry to satisfy the needs of their members. The Cooperative should be *non-profit-making;* whatever surplus remains from the sale of the commodity should go either to maintain the constituent synagogues, or to support other institutions to be decided upon by the Cooperative. The cost of the meat and poultry to the consumer would still be less than it is now because the profit item would be eliminated. If properly administered, such a Cooperative could make of *kashrut* a real asset to Jewish life.

Ultimately, Jews will have to come to recognize that without an organized Jewish community no permanent solution of problems like these will be possible. Until that time, however, every effort should be made to raise the level of communal projects. Here is an opportunity to show what can be done by cooperative effort to clean our house of self-aggrandizement perpetrated in the name of Jewish religious life.

Will Our Foreign-Born Be The Scapegoats?

A RATHER novel way of dealing with the problem of unemployment has been suggested by Mr. Martin Dies, Democratic Congressman from the state of Texas. There are, he figured out, approximately eight million foreign born workers in America presently employed in gainful occupations. If there were a way of liquidating them, their jobs could be a made available to native Americans. Mr. Dies has accordingly volunteered to champion a great reform in American life. He has inaugurated a campaign in Congress to have all foreign-born workers deported from the country. Every native American will then be given the opportunity of a job. Industry will be relieved of the staggering costs of unemployment relief. The arrangement will probably work some hardships on the eight million families who would be deported. But why should we concern ourselves with them? They are, after all, only foreigners, and America should concern herself only with Americans.

The Dies proposal is, of course, so absurd, that it is difficult to take it seriously, even for refutation. Can America afford to lose eight million families or some thirty million souls, approximately a quarter of her population? It would spell America's sure decline as a great nation. In its brutality, Mr. Dies' suggestion is no different from the scheme of a certain chemist who sought an injection that might put the unemployed to sleep until society would need them again, say for another Wall Street boom or an imperialist war.

Proposals such as these are, however, interesting revelations of the extremes to which capitalist apologists are willing to go in their defense of the status quo. Unemployment is the inevitable result of an individualistic economy which uses ma-

chinery, not to create leisure and increase consumption, but to displace labor and multiply profits. To appease the victims of this system you whip up racial or national chauvinism. Germany has made scapegoats out of her Jews. America is to make scapegoats out of her foreign-born population. And who knows but that before long America may be tempted to sacrifice her Jewish population and other minorities as well?

There is, of course, only one ethical way of dealing with our economic breakdown: Socialize our means of production and establish a cooperative commonwealth, direct production to balance the needs of general consumption; then balance labor supply by the needs of production. With the technological equipment and productive forces of this country, the results would be general abundance and enough general leisure to afford the opportunity for every American family, native or foreign-born, to lead a decent, cultivated life.

Some Aspects of The Problem of Religion in Palestine

By Mordecai H. Lewittes

ONE of the most serious religious problems in Palestine is that of the failure of the synagogue to play a central or vital role in the life of the new *yishuv*. The same religious struggle between the young and the old, that typified the last generation both in the old and in the new world, is now being waged in Jerusalem. Youth, despite the demands of the elders, is hardly represented in houses of worship. This accounts for the anomaly of Hebrew as the language of prayer and Yiddish, Espanol (Ladino), Arabic, Persian, Kurdistani, as the languages of conversation in the synagogue. Someone has remarked that most people pray in a language which they do not understand. This situation prevails in Palestine as well, and the extent to which the synagogue is removed from life may be judged by the remoteness of the Hebrew language from the overwhelming majority of worshipers in the synagogue. Outside of Jerusalem the situation is even worse. One finds a synagogue in Haifa only with difficulty. Tel Aviv youth prefer the beach sports field to the synagogue and prayers.

Yet very few attempts have been made to organize synagogues that will attract youth through their esthetic or emotional appeal. The Jeshurun synagogue, in Jerusalem, financed by American funds, is one such attempt. But for all its congregational singing, its service remains cold. More promising is the *Shirat Yisrael,* in the same city, which, through the devoted efforts of Cantor Rivlin, has popularized synagogue music which is truly Jewish in character and spirit. With the coming of Kwartin, Eavitz and others, Tel Aviv promises ultimately to become a center of creative religious music. But on the whole, little has been done to make the synagogue function.

One does find synagogues in the Mizrahi colonies, and in Kfar Hasidim; but those in Afule, Nahalal, Kfar Yehezkel, and even in radical Ain Harod, were set up for the most part to accommodate the old parents of the colonists. They rarely succeed in prevailing upon an unwilling *halutz* to be the tenth person to make up a *minyan.* In Merhavia once my eye was caught by a sign which contained the words, "Afule Synagogue at 8:00 p.m." I read the notice with some interest only to discover that the colonies near Afule were to hold their annual May 1st rally in the synagogue. At the bottom of the notice, in small characters, the *halutzim* were warned not to forget to cover their

heads. And in Nahalal, where some students had gone with Prof. Klein to examine some ancient ruins, Prof. Klein rebuked the colonists. "It grieves me to think," he said, "that the two thousand year old synagogue we excavated far excelled in impressiveness the synagogue newly built in Nahalal."

A great laxity prevails in personal observance. Dietary laws are violated with flagrant disregard of their authority. In Ain Harod the pious parents who had formed their own "commune" so that they could eat kosher food were asked what they thought of the failure of the colonists to observe the dietary laws. "It hurts us when we see our children departing from Jewish Law," they answered. "But we often pray to God that He will forgive them because they treat us so well, and because they are devoting their lives to *binyan haaretz.*" Work ceases on the Sabbath in city and in colony, but many personal violations result in friction between religious and irreligious. This is particularly true in Tel Aviv where vigilance committees often try to stop passing automobiles. On one occasion an English official was stopped, and the vigilantes were unceremoniously forced to ride to the police court on the Sabbath. It is usually difficult to determine whether the religious have overstepped the bounds of tolerance, or whether the irreligious have failed to respect the convictions of others. A satisfactory solution will be worked out only on the basis of mutual tolerance, and not on the basis of reinforced vigilance.

Another serious problem has been raised by the open violation of Jewish marriage law. The Rabbis have complete jurisdiction over marriage and divorce; Palestine has no civil marriage. The percentage of common-law marriages in the colonies is therefore very large. Fictitious Polish marriages, designed to enable some despairing *halutz* or *halutza* to enter Palestine, have contributed to aggravate the condition. Divorces later granted in Palestine are usually not recognized as valid; and many who consider themselves divorced are really married, legally. The common-law marriage is largely the result of the changed status of the woman. She is no longer economically dependent on her husband, but on the entire group. Marriage therefore has economic aspects and the woman need not rely on the security obtained through the traditional marriage forms. On the other hand, the necessity for amicable relationships among small groups living permanently together on a cooperative basis, has tended to elevate rather than lower the moral plane of family life in the *kevutzot.*

II

To understand the nature of the whole religious problem in Palestine it is necessary to bear in mind that the Palestinians live in a completely different universe of discourse from ours. As one illustration, it might be pointed out that the entire question of atheism or agnosticism is virtually unknown in Palestine. The American Jewish college youth who says, "I don't believe in God," is really reacting to his Christian environment. "Do you believe in God?" is somehow not a Jewish question. The test of a religious Jew has always been, "Do you observe the 613 *mitzvot?* Do you observe the dietary laws? Do you observe the Sabbath?" In Palestine when one says that he is *hofshi* (free-thinking), atheism and agnosticism are furthest from his mind. He simply means that he eats *trefa* food, and that he rides and smokes on the Sabbath.

Another factor that must be taken into consideration is the presence in Palestine of a pioneering labor element who are preoccupied with the problem of reconstruction. The late Rabbi Kook, who endeared himself to Jews by his tolerant attitude toward labor, attributed Palestine's irreligion to the fact that it is in the process of reconstruction. In a memorable address on Passover, 5694, at the laying of the cornerstone of the Jeshurun Synagogue, he presented his philosophy of Zionism. He quoted, *"Bonim b'hol*

v'gom'rim b'kodesh." (The act of construction may be profane; the completed structure is holy). Thus in the building of the Temple, laborers frequently approached the Holy of Holies; but when the Temple was completed, no one but the High Priest was permitted to approach the sanctuary.

Indeed, pioneering countries do not have highly developed religious institutionalism. A number of factors contribute to this phenomenon. Pioneers are torn away from the conservative influence of their parents. Stable family life, indispensable for stable religious institutions, is not always maintained in a pioneer country. The dire necessity for economy may mean that almost no funds are available for religious purposes. There are no rigid local traditions to compel the newcomer to conform. The pioneer is forced to break away from his traditional social and economic moorings. It is but natural that religious bonds will be snapped with the rest. Lastly, pioneers come not from the ranks of the middle-classes, but from the ranks of the laborers, who are little sympathetic to religious forms or practices.

The last point requires elucidation. The Palestinian labor organization, the Histadrut, has been the constant target of religious critics because of the lack of observance among the laborers of Palestine. But the Histadrut, a trade union whose aim it is to better the conditions of labor, is wholly neutral on religious matters. The religious laborers of Palestine have formed Hapoel Hamizrahi, although they cooperate with the Histadrut in economic matters, not because the Histadrut is anti-religious, but because they feel the need of a strong pro-religious labor movement.

As was strikingly illustrated at the Nineteenth Zionist Congress, labor leaders have, of late, taken a conciliatory attitude toward religious matters, partly, no doubt, because these leaders received their childhood training not in the mills or mines, but in the Yeshivas of Poland and Russia. Men like Ben Zvi and Rubashoff are able scholars who devote much of their time to scholarly problems which shed light on the development of Israel's religion. Their attitude is conciliatory, no doubt, partly because if Labor's ideals

A MAXIMUM JUDAISM

Those to whom the beginning of Jewish wisdom is the fear of anti-Semitism cannot be expected to derive much joy from a program which recommends the maximum of Jewishness compatible with circumstances. Judaism as a civilization calls upon the Jew to avail himself of every possible opportunity to express himself as a Jew, and not to confine himself to a particular Jewish hobby like some pet charity, favorite temple or appealing Palestinian project. It will be satisfied with nothing less than having the Jew impress every phase of creativity into the service of Jewish life, and it insists upon that life having a solid framework of efficient organization for the furtherance of all worthy interests which Jews have in common. This kind of Judaism cannot be distilled into a wall-motto philosophy. It is Jewish life abundant, rich in content, variegated in appeal, visible and tangible as well as thinkable, occupying space as well as time. It is the ultimate refutation of all attempts to reduce Judaism to a minimum. That only a maximum Judaism can survive is in keeping with Oscar Wilde's paradox, "Nothing succeeds like excess."

From the Preface of the forthcoming book, "Judaism In Transition"
by Mordecai M. Kaplan

in Palestine are to be realized, the sympathies of the layman must not be alienated; if Zionism's ideals are to be realized, factional strife must be minimized. One does not hear preached by Labor in Palestine the familiar radical formulas: "Religion is the opiate of the people"; "Religion is the tool of capitalism"; "Religion tries to preserve the status quo." Labor leaders do not hesitate to refer to Mizrahists who align themselves with Revisionism as "reactionary" and "hypocritical," but they restrict their terms of opprobrium to the political tactics of their opponents, and cast no slurs on their religious convictions. Labor's conciliatory attitude has not been restricted to Congresses. I might illustrate this point by referring to an incident that occurred in the Spring of 1934. Because of strife at the grave of Joseph Trumpeldor in Tel Hai, the Vaad Haleumi undertook to arrange the pilgrimage to the grave of the martyred hero. Several buses left Haifa Friday afternoon, returning after sundown. Rabbi Berlin immediately demanded the resignation of the Executive of the Vaad Haleumi because they countenanced such a public violation of the Sabbath on a pilgrimage officially arranged by the Vaad. The Labor organ, "Davar," in a leading editorial ridiculed Rabbi Berlin's demand that the Executive resign, but maintained that his indignation was entirely just. It strongly cautioned Labor to avoid any public actions calculated to wound religious sentiment.

In general, then, the Histadrut tries to avoid any complications which might be, in Palestinian parlance, *"Lo naim"* (unpleasant). I recall a lecture in the Bezalel Museum arranged by the cultural committee of the Histadrut on the Sabbath. Tickets for Sabbath lectures are purchased on Friday at the Histadrut Cooperative. Several visitors did not buy their tickets in advance and proffered the money to the guide on the Sabbath. He refused to take the coins, saying, *"Lo naim."* Later, however, he beckoned to these visitors, and took them into a small private room where he accepted their money. The incident amused me at the time, but was recalled to me rather sharply by contrast when I visited an Orthodox synagogue in Damascus where the sexton demanded *baksheesh* on the Sabbath. When the cultural committee of the Histadrut plans one of its frequent excursions to Egypt or Syria, it arranges that the Sabbath be spent in Cairo or Damascus, so that it will be unnecessary to ride. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of all the better known guides in Palestine, some of whom conduct excursions where the Sabbath is violated.

But even though the Histadrut avoids situations that are *"Lo naim,"* and adopts a neutral attitude toward religion, it has not satisfactorily solved the problem with which it is confronted. For in Palestine, one cannot merely take the position, "In religious matters let each one follow his own conscience." Palestine, after all, is being rebuilt not on an individual basis, but through the collective effort of the Jewish people. What shall be our attitude toward the violation of Jewish law in the colonies, situated on Keren Kayemet land, and subsidized by the Keren Hayesod? Is a colony just a big private family, or is it a public group which has no right to fly in the face of Orthodox sentiment? The Histadrut defends the former position, the Mizrahi, the latter. Certainly it is not easy to construct a neat formula which will provide us with a satisfactory solution. The *kevutzot* have accepted certain national obligations such as the use of Hebrew labor, and abstention from work on the Sabbath and holidays. Observance of the dietary laws, however, they claim is their own private affair. Where does national obligation end, and private conviction begin? The distinction drawn between the Sabbath and dietary laws probably reflects the reaction against the ancient *halakha* which has never succeeded in robing itself with the poetry and fantasy of *agada;* while the Sabbath, celebrated as a "princess," in folk lore and in folk imagination, has

never lost its hold even on the unobservant.

III

We have thus far spoken of the Histadrut. Labor as a class, with its *dat ha'avodah* has undoubtedly done heroic work in realizing the social ideals of the Prophets. But judged from a traditional standpoint, individual laborers, Labor groups, and colonies are predominantly irreligious. Some of the causes, such as economy, have already been mentioned. One laborer, for example, told me with some amusement that whenever a restaurant in Tel Aviv is declared non-kosher, the laborers flock there in great numbers because then they are sure that the prices are reasonable. In Kfar Saba, where laborers fought one of their bitterest struggles against the use of cheap Arab labor, the *pardessanim* (orange grove owners) retorted, "If laborers are such ardent nationalists, why do they eat only cheap Arab meat." The workers did not attempt to refute this charge, although they pointed out that it was no justification of the stand of the plantation-owners.

Collectivism has many positive features; but one of its evils is that, of necessity, it makes for regimentation, which its adherents ordinarily term "like-mindedness." An Orthodox laborer cannot long remain observant in the unorthodox environment of a *kibbutz* or *kevutza*. A visitor in an Emek colony when passing a storage room inquisitively asked what it contained. "Cast-off *tefillin*," was the reply. But it is difficult to determine how many colonists cast off their *tefillin* as a result of contact with an irreligious environment, and how many out of their own volition. In one case I was told the following story by a laborer. His parents were devout, and he had resolved he would put on *tefillin* daily. But, in order to do so, he was forced to rise twenty or thirty minutes earlier than his companions, who thereupon requested him to place the tea kettle on the fire so that it would be ready for them when they arose. "Why should I be forced to go to such trouble?" said the colonist. "And so I stopped putting on *tefillin*." It was only another way of saying that it is difficult to maintain religious forms in an irreligious environment.

One frequently hears stories in Palestine, often exaggerated no doubt, of German girls who had faithfully promised to light the Sabbath candles, but who were forced to leave the *kevutzot* in which they had settled because of the unsympathetic attitude of the other colonists. A smallholders' settlement or *moshav* allows for more individualism; yet I recall, in Moza, how one colonist hastily removed the Sabbath candles to an obscure corner when she heard neighbors approaching. It was one of the most disappointing scenes that I witnessed in all Palestine, of a woman shamed into concealing her adherence to a time-honored and beautiful Jewish custom.

Another factor that makes for indifference to Jewish religion is the Orthodox emphasis upon extreme observances. The question is still raised in many of the schools whether boys and girls should attend the same elementary schools. An American school teacher, who requested permission to observe a class in the Mizrahi Gymnasium, was somewhat bluntly told that it was considered improper for a young lady to visit a boys' school. This rigid separation of the sexes on religious grounds is carried to almost absurd lengths. The most beautiful synagogues in Jerusalem, such as the Hurva, contain ladies' galleries that might better be termed cages. On visiting a Yemenite synagogue once, I sat in what appeared to be the last row. Behind me was a partition looking like a wall, covered with tapestry. I addressed a few questions to a young Yeminite next to me about the services. I was somewhat surprised to feel myself poked in the back and to hear some angry words hurled at me from the rear. Upon investigation, it turned out that I was being poked by a stick held by a lady behind the tapestry who was

disturbed by our conversation. The tapestry completely hid from sight the women's section of the synagogue. In the Bukharian quarter the women seldom enter their uninviting section of the synagogue, but prefer to sit on the curb outside the house of worship, and listen to the prayers through the open window. Unfortunately, the Oriental Jews are not the only ones who make such poor provision for feminine religious needs. It is true of the most fashionable synagogue in Jerusalem. It was once proposed by a group, among them Dr. Magnes, to form a synagogue with mixed pews, but the idea was soon abandoned when the leaders were threatened with the dreaded ban.

The Orthodox American Jew is little aware of what petty questions trouble the conscience of the Orthodox Palestinian, and which seriously complicate the entire religious problem. A Young Israel group was formed in Jerusalem by some recent immigrants from America. Some of the controversies raised at the very inception which soon threatened to disrupt the entire organization were: should men and women be allowed to sit on the same side of the room at meetings, could dancing be permitted at social functions, was it proper to sit bare-headed at meetings, or to shake hands with a female member. Classes were planned in various Jewish subjects including Hebrew literature; but this was condemned by some members on the quite logical ground that Hebrew literature had been placed under the ban a generation ago by the rabbis of Jerusalem, and that the ban had never been raised. An excursion was planned to the Arnon River, but was hastily called off when it was discovered that bathing suits would have to be donned in the Arnon; mixed bathing is considered immodest by the religious authorities of Palestine.

Many American students attended the Hebron Yeshiva, one of the more moderate Yeshivas in Palestine, but a bare recital of the prohibitions would make the most Orthodox American Jew rise in rebellion. Among the things prohibited were: shaving, attending the theatre, reading a Hebrew paper, study of philosophy without special permission, mingling with the opposite sex, attendance at the Hebrew University, and, to a certain extent, spoken Hebrew. An American student once said to me, "We're in the danger zone, now." "Danger zone? Why there isn't an Arab living within a mile of this spot." "Not that," he answered, "danger of being detected here if seen entering a theatre, or if in the presence of a member of the opposite sex." Not all of these prohibitions were observed. No student would dare bring a Hebrew newspaper into the Yeshiva, but outside he would borrow the paper from an innocent passerby with impunity.

IV

The most extreme elements are the *haluka* Jews living in Jerusalem, Safed, and Tiberias, in dire poverty, opposed to Zionism, spoken Hebrew, and secular education, and zealously defending their *hassidic* garb and earlocks, ignorant of vocation or profession, though often accomplished Talmudists. They still wield considerable influence for the Agudat Israel, and numerous institutions are under their control. Rabbi Kook was severely condemned by these extremists.

Religious extremism persists because Jewish law has not made the major adjustments demanded by modern social conditions. The only adjustment of major significance thus far made has been the suspension of the sabbatical year. Capricious divorce, the difficulties involved in obtaining *halitza,* the *aguna* question, child marriage, inability of the woman to inherit the husband's property, all make the position of the woman a trying one. The rabbis have far-reaching powers but they have failed to wield these powers in the manner made imperative by present-day social problems. The loss of civil and domestic jurisdiction by Jewish courts has been considered one of the major blows suffered by Judaism in the diaspora. Yet its partial rehabilitation in Palestine has

only succeeded in creating new difficulties. The great significance of a progressive Jewish law has been realized by a small group in Palestine who have issued a magazine and held several conventions. But the response has been far from encouraging. The convention of 1934 was opened with the reading of letters from the most prominent religious authorities in Palestine condemning the group. Extremism, factionalism, and unadjusted Jewish law have all served to widen the breach, and more and more, the youth drift away from the religious practice of their ancestors.

Camel's Meat in Eretz Yisrael

By Edward L. Israel

ONE of the many things which I did during this past summer, when I visited Eretz Yisrael, was to be on the lookout for camel's meat. I had heard in America many stories about the rank irreligiousness of the Palestinian Labor group. Particularly during the time of the Zionist Congress elections, we had been informed that the Histadrut had shown flagrant disregard for Jewish tradition by serving camel's meat in its cooperative restaurants.

I am forced to brand the circulators of these reports "bearers of false witness." At least, from my very careful observations, such is the case. I found not only an observance of Jewish dietary laws in the cooperative restaurants operated by the General Jewish Labor Federation, the Histadrut, but particularly in the restaurants where the *halutzim* are fed when they first arrive in Eretz Yisrael, at Jaffa, there is in the window a large Histadrut sign proclaiming that only kosher food is served. I regret that I did not have my camera with me at the time to be able to take a photograph of this sign.

In the course of a very interesting conversation with one of the leaders of the Histadrut on this very subject, I heard the Histadrut attitude clearly expressed. I was told that the leaders of the Jewish Labor group feel that whatever the individual's attitude may be toward the observance or non-observance of Orthodox dietary laws, it is nevertheless true that within the ranks of labor organized under Histadrut auspices, there are many religiously observant Jewish young men and women. It is the feeling of the Histadrut that nothing must be done to compel any violation of these religious loyalties. So, whereas in individual *kevutzot* there may be, by general consent of the group, no specific observance of dietary traditions, as far as the cooperative restaurants in the cities where all workers gather together for their meals, there is observance of *kashrut*. This leader said to me, "We feel it our duty in these cooperative restaurants to observe an atmosphere where even the most Orthodox Jewish worker can enter and eat according to his religious scruples."

Charges concerning the irreligiousness of certain elements of the population of the Palestinian *yishuv,* especially the Labor group, have come from surprising sources. A certain American Reformist rabbi visited Palestine some months ago. His first comments on the situation came in the course of a radio address which he delivered shortly after his return. He praised some aspects of Palestinian life very highly but then went on to lament "the lack of religion." I discovered when I went to Jerusalem this summer that this rabbi, on his visit there, had been practically the only out-of-the-ordinary Jewish tourist who stayed at a non-Jewish hotel. If, by the lack of religion in Palestine, he meant the failure to observe Jewish tradition, he violated that tradition as few Jewish tourists have taken it upon themselves to do. If, on the other hand, he meant by religion something of an ethical life, he

was again wrong as to its absence. But we shall have more to say about this subject a little later.

Another rabbi, also one of my Reformist colleagues, made the statement the other day on his return to New York, that there is more Judaism in New York City than in all of Palestine. Of course there happen unfortunately to be four times as many Jews in New York City as in all of Palestine. But even if he meant quantitative Judaism, he was wrong. The comparative amount of Judaism in either place is not very difficult to weigh and analyze. In the case of New York, we have a polyglot environment in which there is a grim struggle going on against the forces of assimilation. From present indications, it seems to be a decidedly losing battle. On the other hand, in Palestine, whether the analysis of life be made along theological or secular lines, there is no question as to Jewish survival. We may not have in Palestine today the sort of religious Jewishness that we might desire as an ideal. But, on the other hand, Palestine is the one place where there is a possibility for that type of ideal Judaism to grow and to flourish. Surely no one will say that it could possibly come about in New York City.

II

These observations of some of my Reformist colleagues are amusing, to say the least. Surely in the eyes of the Mizrahi, the foremost champions of religious Zionism, American Reformist Judaism is not an ideal for which Palestine ought to strive. I am sure that down in their hearts they feel a greater kinship toward the non-religious *halutzim* than they do with most of us Reformists. I can by no means presume to speak for the Mizrahi, but I hardly doubt what their judgment would be on this matter. The *halutzim,* at worst, do violence to Jewish traditions through indifference. According to the strictly Orthodox Jew, the Reformist compounds the felony by violating Jewish tradition as an alleged matter of principle.

In all truth, there is not an enormous amount of religion in the formal Orthodox theological sense among the young Labor group of Jewish Palestine. They are, on the other hand, infinitely more Jewish, and no whit less religious, than the average American Jewish youth. But this bald statement does not begin to explain the whole situation. I found in Eretz Yisrael absolutely no evidence of anti-religious propaganda anywhere. Youth there may not yet have found a means of expression of its desire for the continuity of the Jewish spiritual traditions. As we shall see in greater detail a little later, Palestinian Jewish youth is groping religiously. But it is groping along positive lines, and not, as our own youth, in utter bewilderment and often in despair.

In a very definite manner, however, there are on the part of this young *halutz* group demonstrations of real sympathy with Jewish religious traditions. All of them are *shomre shabbat.* Sabbath observance is universal throughout Labor Palestine in a manner which could never be possible in the *galut.* More than that, these young people assiduously practice the time honored precept of *kibbud av vaem, filial respect.* Many of the *kevutzot* out of their meager funds have brought over aged parents from Poland or Roumania. Many of these parents are Orthodox in their religious observance. The young people, far from scorning the religious devotion of their elders, have put aside, out of their usually inadequate quarters, places for religious worship and have taken from their paltry funds an amount necessary to install special kitchens so that the parents may fully observe the dietary laws. When we consider the prevalent scorn wtih which many of the younger Jews not only in Russia but even here in America treat the religious loyalties of their parents, we can evaluate these actions of the young *halutzim* of Palestine more accurately. And this *shabbat* that they observe, while it may not often be given over to the formal ritual of traditional worship, is filled with a pursuit of cultural life and a modern nationalistic

interpretation of Torah—a search for those finer appreciations in a Jewish national atmosphere, which make for the preservation of our people.

We need not dilate upon their religiousness from the point of view of a practical spiritual interpretation of social justice. The whole-souled devotion of the *halutzim* to an ideal of service makes the protestations of some of our Reformist rabbis all the more ridiculous. Reformist Judaism has tried to emphasize the Prophetic message. It has insisted with Micah that true religion is a pursuit of righteousness and justice in human relationships rather than an emphasis on the "thousands of rams" and the "ten thousands of rivers of oil." Anyone who has seen the devoted self-sacrifice of the young *halutzim* in the agricultural colonies, where, without any thought of individual gain, they work for the social welfare of the group, cannot but be religiously inspired. Here we have as in no other place in the world a refutation of the assertion that is so often made that human beings have to have a selfish motive of gain in terms of gold in order to work. In the *kevutzot,* there is a complete repudiation of any such idea. They live for the common welfare. They labor in order that the entire group may be lifted up. They brave danger for Jewish ideals. They give up private possessions of even the most intimate sort in order that there may be established a truly cooperative society.

III

It is impossible to understand the religious background of present-day Jewish Palestine without analyzing the attitudes of the young people as dependent upon the environments from which they have

WHAT TO LIVE FOR AS A JEW

A Jew is by birth and history committed to a relationship which he cannot repudiate without courting the ills of self-suppression, inner conflict, and consequent moral injury to himself. But if he accepts his destiny, then his salvation must include finding his affiliation with his people a stimulus to his highest mental, moral and spiritual powers. If he fails to find that kind of stimulus in his Jewish affiliation, the only rational thing for him to do is to reconstruct the conditions of Jewish life with a view to supplying the incentive that it lacks. When we find that the world about us is not conducive to our inner growth and self-fulfillment, we can achieve inner growth by making it conducive. Similarly with the Jewish people, if it now lacks the power to bring out the best in those who compose it, if it is unable to make them feel spiritually at home in it, it must be made to undergo such changes in its ideology and structure as would generate in it that power. Few will claim for Jewish life in its present state that it can do much to help the Jew who is really concerned in the saving of his soul. If Jewish life is to do for the Jews of the coming generation what it did for the generations of the past—if it is to give them something to live for—it must submit to a process of reconstruction. Most of the ancient material may have to be utilized in the renovated structure, but the plan and the general set-up will have to be different. In the meantime, the urgent need for the reconstruction of Jewish life must become the besetting passion of the modern Jew. In this transition period, reconstruction itself must be that for which he must strive and live as a Jew.

From Chapter I of the forthcoming book, "Judaism In Transition"
by Mordecai M. Kaplan

come. There is a large group that was born and grew up in post-revolutionary Russia. They had therefore little or no religious training. They were raised in an atmosphere where the established government and educational institutions were definitely anti-religious. These youths had enough real Jewishness to want to translate their social ideals into the life of Eretz Yisrael. If they came there lacking in an appreciation of Jewish theological traditions, it is their background and upbringing that are to blame. And even this group from revolutionary Russia has dropped its Russian-instilled anti-religiousness in the thorough Jewish environment of Palestine. It may be indifferent. It may shrug its shoulders when you raise a religious issue, but it is not a counterpart of the atheistic Russian youth group among which it was raised.

The second, and by far the larger portion of the young people of Labor Palestine—leaving aside, of course, Hapoel Hamizrahi, the officially orthodox Jewish youth labor group—is closely akin in religious attitude to our own youth. But they are not merely indifferent as are most of our young Jews in the *galut*. They are tempted at times to look upon the older type of religion as too formal and often too superstitious, but they are beginning to realize the necessity of integrating the reborn Jewish life of Eretz Yisrael with a spiritual tradition. They lack leadership. There is none to articulate these thoughts for them and to inspire them to some concrete action. Their lives are filled with the rugged labor of the tasks that lie before them, often rendering them physically too tired for initiative in anything else. But they are ready to be led.

This analysis is not my own conjecture. It is the result of a number of interesting conversations I had with young people right in the midst of the *kevutzot*. They insist that the religion which they are to follow must grow out of the life that they are living in Eretz Yisrael. It cannot be a *galut* Judaism grafted onto the free environment of Palestine. I have among my travel notes a record of one of these conversations with a remarkable young *halutz*. It is interesting because it constitutes my impressions on the spot and at the time when I was living with the group. Here is what I wrote:

"The group as a whole is not at all anti-religious. It has simply not yet found a means of expression for its desire for a sense of continuity with Jewish spiritual tradition. The young people seem to want that means to come, and they are ready to follow the leader who will point out the way. Already two festivals in particular which they can link up with their present life are finding modern expression. On *Shabuot,* which has almost died out in the *galut,* except where it becomes Confirmation Day among the Reformist Jews, there is in Eretz Yisrael a regular pilgrimage when offerings are brought to the Jewish National Fund. Thus the present life of the *halutz* transposes the spirit of the ancient offering of the first fruits. Again on *Hamisha Asar b'Shevat,* the ancient new year of the trees, there is widespread festivity in the *kevutzot* in which the children enter ardently into the celebrations. Religion must grow out of the life of a people. This was the source of the vigor of ancient Israelitish religion. In the grim *galut* of the ghetto, Judaism flourished because it was the symbol of our defiance. It is dying in the *galut* of the American type. The ghetto's Judaism or even the Reformist's adaptation to the life of the *galut* finds no real response in the life of the *halutz*. Yet out of the sum total of Jewish tradition he wants somebody to rebuild something which will have meaning for his existence in the terms of the life he is living, and bind him spiritually and culturally with all that is best in the traditions of Israel. There is room for a real leader. But he must be one who fully understands, and is certainly more or less part of, this new type which is growing up."

Tel Aviv, which in many respects is the least Jewish of all Eretz Yisrael, being

entirely too much of a hodge-podge of the ghettos of the world, boasts a number of large synagogues. They, however, are not the answer to the religious needs of the new Palestine. They fill a purpose for the lives of some people, but they are not the nucleus of the new Judaism that is to grow up in Eretz Yisrael.

Let me give you another on-the-spot impression, one that I wrote after my return from the services at one of these synagogues:

"We went over to the large Ashkenazic synagogue on Allenby Street. They were just in the midst of the Torah reading, and what commotion and disorder! You could see that most of the worshipers were comparatively recent arrivals, or else old men. There was far more Yiddish than Hebrew spoken. Here is the Judaism that is bound to die out in Eretz Yisrael, as it is doomed everywhere else. The whole religious future of Palestine is a question, but it will certainly not be the ghetto Judaism of the old style *shul*. There is room for a real Reformist movement in Eretz Yisrael. It cannot be the Reformism of America, and it must be under the leadership of real Jewish nationalists who understand the new Palestine. A new leader or set of leaders from the proper source and with the proper equipment could do wonders here. Not in Tel Aviv, perhaps, at this time, although even here there is a real demand for something which will hold the youth."

A *shabbat* visit to the numerous synagogues which one finds in Jerusalem brought to light the fact that they are all poorly attended, especially as far as young people are concerned. Apparently, the children of Orthodox parents in Eretz Yisrael are no more religious in the formal sense than the young *halutzim*. In fact, I may say that they are even less so. The *halutzim* have a real religious fervor, a real service of an ideal cause which at least for a while can be a substitute for formal worship.

I saw in Jerusalem in particular on *shabbat* several evidences of a type of religiousness that bordered on fanaticism. With the trumpet blast that marks the coming of the Sabbath, young fanatical groups went around banging on doors of stores where any sort of lights could be seen, holding up automobiles that were traveling after the Sabbath had begun, and forcing their drivers to abandon the cars in the streets. We Jews, along with the Liberals, have bitterly objected to kindred demonstrations and compulsions here in America. We feel that this type of fanaticism cannot be part of any modern culture. I witnessed it with none the less disapprobation in Jerusalem than I would in Baltimore. I felt somewhat the same way about the Wailing Wall. I appreciated the emotions and sentiments that went into the tears of the worshipers who lamented the lost sanctuary, but I felt myself a bit impatient at tears that were shed so constantly for the dead past when right at the very threshold of the mourners was a new Jewish life growing up filled with enormous possibilities of which they were apparently unconscious. In reading my notes after my first visit to the Wailing Wall, I find that I comment, "When will their eyes truly begin to behold the new Zion?"

There are no contrasts of Jewish life in the *galut* quite as great as the difference between either adults or children of the old Palestine and the new. This is particularly true with regard to the children. The little stunted bodies, the sallow complexions, the flat chests, the outlandish garbs of the ghetto children of Jerusalem or Safed—compare these with that crowd of vigorous youngsters which I saw playing at Ain Harod or Bet Alpha. Here are two worlds that can hardly be reconciled or identified with each other. In one there is only an exotic sentiment for a dying past. In the other there is life and hope. In the one, Judaism can never live because it must die with the ghetto. In the other, a reborn Judaism, partaking of the nature of our real tradition, is bound to be born.